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LABOUR ORGANISER



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THE LABOUR ORGANISER

EDITOR: A. L. WILLIAMS

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PRICE FIVEPENCE

A Plan for Victory

HERE were many Conservatives who thought that Mr. Macmillan had made a mistake in not going to the country in May. They pointed to the results of the local elections when, in addition to winning seats in many parts of the country, the Tory vote tended to be everywhere.

The results of the Penistone and the Whitehaven by-elections should cause Prime Minister's critics to think again. Both seats were regarded as safe for Labour, the majority at Whitehaven in 1955 was 6,194 and the Penistone majority was 11,636. It is usual in seats with such majorities for Labour supporters to be more apathetic in by-elections than in General Elections, and for the Labour share of the vote to decrease, but at Penistone Labour's share of the vote increased by 1.8 per cent, and at Whitehaven by 0.6 per cent, the latter being the same increase as at South-West Norfolk three months previously.

★

In the three by-elections the Conservative vote declined, if only slightly, so that it looks as if a May General Election would not have been such a runaway Tory victory as some imagined. On this swing, the Tories could have lost seats, and could even have lost power.

All the signs point to October as the General Election month, and it is believed at Westminster that when the

House of Commons goes into summer recess it will not meet again until after the General Election.

The Tories tend to improve their position in the country when the House is not meeting. The Opposition cannot question Ministers about Government pronouncements and the public platform is not an effective substitute for the floor of the House.

★

The comings and goings of Ministers receive a great deal of publicity in the Press and on radio and television, but the limelight is trained on them, not as politicians, but as statesmen! And this summer the back-bench Tory M.P.'s, candidates and workers will devote themselves assiduously to work in the constituencies.

It would be tragic if Constituency Labour Parties were to go into a coma during the summer months. Warm weather and light evenings make indoor meetings difficult, but probably we hold too many indoor meetings of the faithful few anyhow. In fact, experience shows that early and late summer are very suitable periods for open-air political activity, especially doorstep work.

Holidays often are advanced as an excuse for doing nothing for two or three months in the summer. Not many ordinary people have more than a fortnight's holiday and they take them over the whole of the summer, so that

in most constituencies the vast majority are at home most of the time.

The summer months are crucial. A great deal has been done already to strengthen our organisation. Election methods have been improved and records have been built up, but only in a few constituencies has this work been completed.

★

Moreover, existing records require checking because of the many removals since the records were compiled. The longer the General Election is delayed the greater will the problem of the removals become, as the qualifying date for the current Register was 10th October, 1958.

Though a good start has been made in some constituencies in registering Labour supporters for the postal vote, much more still needs to be done to get anywhere near the Tory's achievement in this field. Each constituency in the next four months is urged to:

- (1) **reach its required target of 'Promises';**
- (2) **undertake systematically the tracing of 'Removals';**
- (3) **register at least 500 Labour supporters for postal votes;**
- (4) **continue the house - to - house sale of *The Future Labour Offers You to 'Promises' and 'Doubtfuls'*.**

Such a programme of action, if carried through successfully, would ensure a victory of a magnitude to make worthwhile the hard labour of so many during the past few years.

Though recent by-elections show that the swing against the Tories is only slight at present, it does not follow that the outcome of the General Election is certain to be tight, with either Labour or the Tories in with a slender majority. As David Butler pointed out in the *Manchester Guardian*, only a small increase in the swing one way or the other could produce a Tory or a Labour Government with a substantial majority.

The swing is not automatic nor is it

uniform. This was underlined by the 1955 results when not only was the swing shown a great variation in the swing against Labour, but in the case of Lincoln the swing actually was in the opposite direction.

There is much dispute about the effect of local organisation on election results, but even if it is admitted that the effect is only small, it is sufficient to determine the character of the representation in constituencies where no seat is held by a narrow majority, and there are so many of these seats as to make the effectiveness of local organisation a determining factor at the next General Election.

New Organiser For Southern Region

FRANK SHEPHERD'S many friends will be pleased to learn that he is responding very well to treatment, but his medical advisers have made it clear that when he is again fit enough to return to work he will not be able to do a full day which involves a great deal of travelling and evening work.

In the light of these circumstances, and because of the nearness of the General Election, the National Executive Committee felt compelled to fill the vacancy of Regional Organiser in the Southern Region. The post was advertised and after interviewing shortlisted applicants, Mr. Ron Hayward was appointed.

Mr. Hayward entered the agency service in 1947 when he was appointed agent to the Banbury constituency, which was his home ground. In 1949 he became agent at Rochester and Chatham, where he stayed for two years, until his appointment as Assistant Regional Organiser for the Southern Region.

During his years as Assistant Regional Organiser he has acquired a wide knowledge of the Southern Region, its personalities and its problems. When Frank Shepherd fell ill, Ron Hayward stepped into the breach.

FOR SMOOTHER REGISTRATION

In recent months attention has been drawn in the *Labour Organiser* to one of the anomalies of electoral registration. Readers may be interested to learn that a Working Party appointed by the Secretary of State has been examining Registration procedure and forms. On behalf of this Working Party a Treasury O. & M. officer has conducted enquiries in selected registration areas.

The investigations appear to have been primarily directed towards the various working methods of Electoral Registration Officers. Consequently, the main recommendations of the Working Party are concerned with the efficient and economical use of staff and the streamlining of the methods used, particularly in the actual preparation of the Annual Register.

It is obvious, however, that attention has also been given to the sort of problems which have been ventilated in these columns from time to time, and which have also caused concern to the Electoral Registration Officers.

One of the items examined was the method of presentation of the Electors' Lists, and the possibility of producing a Draft Register in place of the B and C Lists was again considered—and rejected.

Checking Lists

The Working Party recognised that electors might experience difficulty in checking the lists, particularly if, being new to a district, they may not know which polling district register they should be in. It was also found that the notice attached to the Lists on distribution (R.P.F.27) was not well designed. To assist electors, the 'Notice for Guidance of Persons inspecting the Electors' Lists' is being revised.

It was noted that in those constituencies where a street index forms part of each register, the task of electors 'finding their way' through the lists was made easier; so it is now recommended that the use of street indexes

should be adopted by Electoral Registration Officers whenever possible.

Our readers will not be surprised to learn that the Working Party expressed concern at the number of out-of-date entries for service voters in the register. As a result of their findings the Service Departments have been consulted, and the following revised procedure has been agreed upon:

In future, Commanding Officers will be asked, when making their annual check, that every serviceman has been given an opportunity to make a service declaration, to ensure at the same time that servicemen who have already made service declarations should confirm that they are up-to-date.

Special Form

A special form is also to be provided for the use of Electoral Registration Officers when making enquiries to the Services Register Index about the validity of service declarations. The introduction of this form will cut down the clerical work which such enquiries involve.

In addition, with a view to obviating some of the difficulties and complaints that arise where service voters no longer have any connection with the qualifying address, registration officers will now be permitted to put the names of such voters at the end of the relevant part of the register in the following manner:

Other Service Voters

S—Brown, John.

Formerly of 1 High Street

The report contains comparisons on the degree of success attained by Electoral Registration Officers in collecting the information from householders for the annual register. It is interesting to note that in areas where the Form A is posted to householders, the best initial return was 55 per cent.

Some advice on 'follow up' procedure is given by the O. & M. officer. Readers may have noted that Form A was revised last year—as a result of one of the first recommendations made by the Working Party.

I don't know whether the figures relating to claims and objections could be regarded as average, but in the constituencies visited in the course of the Working Party's enquiries, the highest number in a county constituency was 12 objections and 20 claims, and 5 of each in boroughs.

The recommendations of the Working Party have been accepted by the Secretary of State and brought to the notice of Electoral Registration Officers. As they are of an administrative nature, no regulations will be issued—and no change of law involved.

Nevertheless, everyone concerned with electoral registration will welcome the recommendations, particularly those dealing with Service Electors. It will be interesting to see what improvements will be shown in the next Annual Register!

DEATHS OF TWO SOUTH-WEST VETERANS

THE last of the founding-fathers of Exeter Labour Party has passed from the scene, his life an impressive example for the second generation which must now take over.

Frank Tarr died on 14th May at the age of 79 after a very short illness. He was denied the pleasure of completing his last task, that of election agent for 10 city council candidates.

On the public life of the city he has left indelible marks. He enriched the civic life. Alderman, Magistrate, Sheriff, Mayor, at all times an outstanding figure in council work. A tactician of shrewd judgment, he held the office of Leader of the Council Labour Group for 28 years, and in polemical encounter he was the equal of any in the massed ranks of the Tory majority.

Originally a printer by trade, he was one of the earliest members of the Typographical Association in Exeter, and took a leading part in organisation and wages negotiations throughout Devon.

Over all this, it was his Party service that entitles him to a place in the Valhalla of the *Labour Organiser*. From the time of his entry into the Party, he was never out of office. Three periods as president,

three long ones as secretary; and when just over a year ago, he relinquished office to a younger man, he remained in harness as a busy assistant secretary. Since passing the age of 70 he has acted every year as election agent to the whole body of Labour candidates for the council.

To the writer he had expressed the hope, modestly and sincerely, that he would die in the service of the Party. He had his wish.

Clem Jones

ALTHOUGH I knew that Alderman Reeves was a sick man, it was a very great shock when I heard that he had been taken to Poole General Hospital, following a severe heart attack. He died there the same day—31st May.

For nearly 30 years, Alderman Reeves was secretary/manager of Poole Labour Club, which was started in the stables of the house where he and his wife were living, and in the year his daughter Margaret was born. In 1929, he gave up his job as a carpenter to take up the secretaryship and as a result of his drive and enthusiasm, the Centenary Hall was built in Poole in 1934—the centenary of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

Alderman Reeves was for 10 years secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers at Branksome; he was secretary of the Newtown Ward Labour Party, and in 1925 became secretary of the East Dorset Labour Party. He continued as secretary/agent of the new Poole Labour Party until the appointment of a full-time agent, when he took over the duties of hon. treasurer, a position he held at the time of his death.

Alderman Reeves was first elected to Poole Borough Council in 1928, became in 1937 the first Labour Sheriff of Poole, first Labour Alderman in 1948 and the town's first Labour Mayor in 1954. In the following year, he stood unsuccessfully as Labour's Parliamentary candidate, but reduced his opponent's previous majority.

I have been associated with Fred since first coming to Poole nearly 10 years ago and, like all the other members of the Party, I relied on his experience and advice. For us, he was one of the 'grand old men' of socialism—he epitomised for us the early struggles in the movement and we respected him for his enthusiasm, his knowledge and his fighting qualities.

K. E. Lamber

A POLLING STATION AT HOME!

FOR several years the problem of providing a suitable polling station for the growing electorate on a new council housing estate in Loughborough remained unsolved.

Our officers had more than once discussed the problem with the Town Clerk and his staff. All were agreed that there ought to be another polling station—but equally agreed that there were no suitable premises available.

The existing polling station was five miles from the far end of this estate and, incidentally, about the same distance from the centre of the town. This meant that voters travelling by bus to vote, boarded a town bus and, after recording their vote, were faced with a walk of over a mile, either to their home or to the town centre—or they waited half-an-hour for the next bus.

This situation meant that we were very dependent on cars. In spite of all our efforts, we never had sufficient, and the result was always a low poll.

Prior to this year's municipal elections I visited the Town Clerk's office for a discussion on this annual problem. This was my first dealings with the situation—I had only been here 15 months) and after a lengthy chat it was agreed that if a council house became vacant we would use it, purely as an experiment, as a polling station. Luck was with us, and the front room of a house was set up as a polling station.

WIDE REGISTER

It was then necessary to divide the electoral register for the polling district, the total electorate being 2,077, of whom some 1,000 were in the council estate. The splitting of the register created a number of administrative problems, and great care had to be taken to prevent confusion in the minds of the electors.

But the difficulties were well worth while when we saw the people turning out to vote. Many of them had never

by
Martin Gallagher

exercised their right to vote in this particular area.

I am not in a position to say how many more people voted as compared with other years, but it was obviously a much higher poll. Our job on polling day was very much easier, and needless to say, our vote was increased.

To find the viewpoint of the officials on this experiment, I spoke to the Presiding Officer and his staff, and apart from the congestion in the evening, they were perfectly satisfied with the arrangements. In many respects they were better off than they would have been with other temporary accommodation; they had, for instance, ideal cooking and toilet facilities!

I do not suggest that this experiment is an innovation, but I am convinced that more effort should be made to overcome these inadequate polling facilities.

We in Loughborough would have no hesitation in suggesting that a private, or council, house should be used as a polling station whenever the necessity arose. I would suggest that similar procedure could be usefully applied in other parts of the country.

★ ★ ★

Bert Williams writes:

Martin Gallagher is right. Houses and other premises as well as temporary constructions have been used before as polling stations, but not often enough. His contribution serves as a further reminder for parties to give this matter attention now.

The general procedure for securing additional or alternative polling stations was dealt with by Len Sims in last December's *Labour Organiser*, so I am merely commenting on the points arising from the Loughborough 'experiment'.

In this instance they were fortunate in having a house empty at the right time, but what happens at the next election? They may not be so lucky. Having succeeded in this first step, others must obviously be taken to ensure that there is a permanent polling place on the estate.

It will probably mean finding a householder who is willing to provide similar facilities—not so easy when it would involve removing furniture in order to give the space required. The alternatives can be either (a) erecting a temporary polling station, or (b) dividing the electorate in the estate into two, using two houses instead of one.

This latter might well be justified with an electorate of 1,000 and would also avoid the congestion which apparently occurred during the peak hours. While this would involve employing extra staff, it would probably be less expensive than erecting a temporary structure.

Those of our parties with rural electorates should give special consideration to the possibility of using dwelling houses, etc., as polling stations. There are many parishes with two or three

hundred electors which form part of a polling district where the polling station is in an adjacent parish.

Some of these are linked because very small electorates, but we've come across many instances where separate polling stations would be justified.

So look closely at your rural parishes, note their electorate, and list those who electors have to go into another parish to vote. Then prepare a case to present to the Electoral Registration Officer. If you've plenty to choose from, take the 'best' cases first.

It may be a slow business, but it's worth attention, for it is often in these areas that we fail to mobilise our full support. We cannot hope to compete with the Tories in the conveying of supporters to the poll, so let us make it easier for ours to get there under their own steam.

Selling Labour's Policy

THE East Midlands' 41 constituencies have to date taken 80,815 copies of *The Future Labour Offers You*. This figure does not include any large orders from Trade Unions, and none has been given away free by wealthy parties. All have been or are being sold on the doorstep, at the factory and pit gates, and on stalls in Co-operative Society premises, or at street markets.

The constituency taking the highest number is the safe Labour Ashfield, which has taken 5,000 and sold nearly all of them. Three thousand have been sold in the Kirkby-in-Ashfield urban district area alone, which only has an electorate of about 14,000, and has a solid Labour council.

The constituency selling the highest number of the pamphlet in relation to its Labour vote is Newark, which has sold a copy to nearly one in five of its Labour vote. Next come Wellingborough and Grimsby, whose sales have been 13 per cent and 12 per cent respectively.

These four constituencies were invited to appoint a member to have dinner in the House of Commons as the guest of the East Midlands Parliamentary Group in recognition of their party's effort.

One or two outstanding examples of successful selling are: Chesterfield, where

800 copies were sold at the gates of the Markham Colliery one Friday afternoon. In Derby, the secretary of the Alvaston ward quickly sold 300 copies in the early part of the campaign; Wellingborough, in the first 10 days of the campaign, sold 1,000 copies; Mr. E. Alcock sold 500 copies in his village of Clipstone, where the estimated Labour vote is 1,900. Newark chose him to attend the dinner.

Parties are now talking of organising stalls at seaside resorts during the summer season.

Union Co-operation

We are receiving considerable help selling the document from Trade Unions and the National Union of Mineworkers (Derbyshire Area) have been most co-operative. They met the officers of the constituency parties in their area and with them drew up plans for meetings between the party officers and the branch committees of the pits in each constituency.

At these meetings arrangements were made for organising sales at the pit gates and the effort in Chesterfield, mentioned previously, followed these meetings.

Nearly every full-time Trade Union official has attended a meeting with the Regional Organiser and discussed ways and means by which they might be able

give assistance both now and at a general Election. Unions covering people who are likely to be away from home on polling day have circulated full details of the postal vote.

Many of the officials agreed to get lists of people with cars who might be willing to lend them at the election.

Following some of the consultations, visits were made to Shop Stewards' meetings to encourage them to make efforts to sell *The Future Labour Offers You* in the factories.

Now that the local elections are out of the way, we are going to encourage all our parties to start fresh campaigns for winning the glossy.

J. Cattermole

RUSHCLIFFE S REALLY N ACTION

RUSHCLIFFE, the highly marginal Nottinghamshire constituency covering a widely scattered agricultural community; mining villages, and a large middle-class city suburban area, went to Action' last November, and has remained in action ever since.

The pattern of our campaign has perhaps been a little different from that adopted in most parts of the country, simply because we felt our priorities were a little different. We decided at the outset the following plan of action: (1) A maximum sale of the policy document. (2) A build-up of publicity for the prospective candidate. (3) A complete marked list. (4) Obtaining the maximum postal vote.

At the start of the campaign, we set each ward and local party a target to aim for for document sales, based on the electorate and estimated Labour support, and making a total sale in the constituency of 2,200 copies, if each area reached target.

In almost every case the target has been reached. In some it has been exceeded, and in some sales have reached 2,700 copies.

Sales are, of course, continuing, and we hope that before the election breaks, sales will have exceeded 4,000 copies.

The prospective candidate, Neville Sandelson, has done tremendous work. One full week in every six he has spent in the constituency, as well as week-ends in between. We have organised round him, and within the framework of our 'Into Action' campaign, a 'Meet the People' campaign, and now, for the summer months, an 'On Your Doorstep' campaign.

Press Relations

Our relationship with the six local newspapers has been built up to a point where there is hardly a week goes by without a news-item on the candidate appearing in their columns.

In addition, every other week an advertisement is inserted in each of these papers dealing with local activities of the candidate, or advertising the document.

The candidate sent a special appeal letter, together with a copy of the 'Into Action' card, to each member in the constituency. These are being followed up and, as a result, a large number of additional offers of help for both now and during the election have been secured.

Our propaganda activity has consisted of a number of leaflet distributions, a 16-sheet and double crown poster campaign, frequent open-air and indoor meetings, and the newspaper advertisements already mentioned.

Finally, as a last thing before the election breaks, we hope to produce a special four-page pictorial leaflet, further publicising the candidate and policy document, and drawing the attention of the electors to the fact that they are a part of Rushcliffe—an important consideration in Labour areas which have twice been affected by redistribution.

David Robertson

HOW TO BUILD UP THE POSTAL VOTE

A new 16-page pamphlet giving details of postal and proxy voting, with practical suggestions for tackling this important work.

One copy 5d.: 12 copies 3/-: 50 copies 10/-
THE LABOUR PARTY — PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

IN a year when the tide was running against Labour, Westminster has broken the ten-year Tory monopoly on the city council by winning six seats. Four years of patient organising activity lie behind this achievement.

In 1955, the Cities of London and Westminster Labour Party was at its lowest ebb. Apathy and discouragement were fed by uniform failure in all elections, relieved only by the capture of six quickly lost seats in the landslide of 1945.

A Trotskyist group had largely destroyed what life there was in the Party; the considerable working-class population of Westminster was either ignorant of or hostile to the party; paper membership had fallen to 300, mostly uncollected and the treasury was empty. The party had become a left-wing discussion circle totally without influence.

The Problem

The problem was to break the vicious circle of failure creating disorganisation and disorganisation inviting failure. An opportunity was provided by the out-of-date ward boundaries in the city. In the business area 15,000 electors were represented by 24 councillors, while the main working and middle-class residential areas had 15 councillors for 36,000 electors.

These 36,000 voters were concentrated in 2 out of 14 wards. In Victoria ward with 24,000 electors, Labour's substantial vote was always swamped by the Tories from such areas as Dolphin Square, and in St. John's ward with 12,000 voters the best we could ever do was to split representation with the Tories in 1945.

In four years of negotiations and representations, two schemes were put forward by the Labour Party for redivision of the city into wards of roughly equal electorate, one for 15 wards with 4 councillors each, the other—much better for Labour—for 20 wards with 3 councillors each.

THE BRE Into W

For ten years the Tories City Council. Overdue re effort to put the local par gains at this year's borou to win m

Only by splitting the city up into small units could the considerable scattered Labour vote be made effective. This was recognised by our opponents, who proposed 10 wards with 6 councillors each and electorate weighted in accordance with rateable value. Eventually, the Home Secretary after a two-day public inquiry, made an order putting into effect Labour's first choice scheme for 20 wards.

Increase Membership

Improvement in organisation could not, however, await this happy outcome. The first step was to consolidate and increase the membership. In Victoria ward, which was still functioning, though feebly. Sufficient collectors were found to collect from all existing members and as further collectors were found, a series of membership drives were launched.

Elsewhere the combined ward organisation where the Trotskyists held sway was broken up into two separate wards and former members induced to return to activity.

At the constituency level correspondence was dealt with promptly, members applying to join were passed to their ward organisation. Membership rose from a shadowy 300 in 1955 to

THROUGH minster!

monopoly of Westminster wards, plus a determined basis, brought six Labour how plans are being made for council seats.

guine 940 at the end of 1958. Information obtained on membership canvasses and at previous elections, for the first time in Westminster, embodied in a marked register.

Expansion in membership was matched by expansion in activity. A campaign of leaflet distribution and a public meeting was held on the Rent

The tenants of the Crown Estate are organised in a protest against the rent increases and another campaign conducted among council tenants. A monthly news letter was produced and distributed in areas of main support.

Test

The L.C.C. election of 1958 proved the first electoral test of our improved organisation and a rehearsal for the city council elections in 1959. The poll was a low one, as in most parts of London, but we reduced the Tory majority below 10,000 for the first time and increased our vote from 10,000 to 5,000, the second largest percentage increase in London. Perhaps the best feature was that 100 members took part in one way or another.

Three plans for party reorganisation were drawn up in advance, one for each of the schemes for redivision of wards which were being considered by

the Home Office. When, therefore, the Home Office decision was announced it was possible to put the new organisation into effect immediately, with the minimum of dislocation of activity.

It was impossible to set up a ward organisation in each of the 20 wards, so Westminster was divided for party purposes into four areas of from 4 to 6 wards.

All Fought

For the first time we fought each ward in the 1959 elections, with the full three candidates in 14 wards and one candidate in each of the remaining 6. In 8 wards, considered winnable, a full campaign was fought. In these wards some 14,500 electors were canvassed out of about 25,000 residential electors—no slight achievement in an area which includes many streets of decaying houses in multiple occupation; Soho ward presents electoral difficulties all its own.

Special attention was paid to removals and we had the satisfaction of knowing that the majorities of two of our councillors were less than the number of Labour removals who voted. Some 200 members took part in the election; it is doubtful if four years ago we had 200 paid-up members.

In two winnable wards, City Council Tenants' Association candidates stood. Labour's earlier ineffectiveness, combined with personal ambition and Tory encouragement, seem to have been the main causes of the intervention.

Its result was that one 'Tenants' councillor shared the representation in Churchill ward with two Labour councillors, while in Millbank ward, the strongest Labour ward in the city, Tenants' candidates, securing some 500 votes, put the Tories in with majorities between 37 and 75, in a poll of over 2,000.

Four years' work and only six seats won—but 230 more votes in three wards would have meant eight more seats; 1,300 more votes were polled than in 1956. Already preparation for the 1962 campaign has started with the issue of follow-up leaflets. We have breached the walls of the last 100 per cent Tory citadel in London and in three years we shall send many more Labour councillors to join the present little band.

ASHLEY BRAMALL

HARROW EAST: THE LAST WOR

MY article about Harrow East has brought forth some extraordinary comments and a dreadfully mixed-up argument. Ron Brewer finds the expression "innate conservatism" "emotive", and I am obliged to agree with him, since it seems to have generated considerable emotion.

But at least I didn't go so far as to describe any committee room system as "highly exotic", which, according to two dictionaries of some standing, means "brought in from abroad" or something like that.

What a pity it is that, when we come to discuss election organisation and similar practical subjects, we never quite succeed in shutting out the personal and the irrelevant. Take, for instance, the last bitterly pointed remark with which Ida Moore and Mary Kinnear end their letter: "We didn't lose any seats in the borough elections."

What is this meant to show? What useful contribution is intended to the argument about methods and the use of personnel? It's obviously a reference to the fact that in Reading we *did* lose seats. In fact, we lost five. I'm glad they didn't in Harrow.

Ron Brewer says he "puts not his trust in systems, but in methods", and goes on to discuss systems at length. He uses the word "system" 23 times and "method" once. I used "system" only three times (once in inverted commas) and "method" 14 times. Where are we? Which of us is which?

Little Difference

The fact is that there is very little difference between our two approaches to electioneering. Last month's *Labour Organiser* contained an article by Ron in which he said "... no matter how good the system, unless there has been a good canvass and all the other work carried through, it is unlikely that the Labour poll will be anything like it should be".

An article of mine published some 12 months ago began: "Although a good system, designed to direct efforts of election workers and cut irrelevant activity, can do a lot to help no system ever yet won an election. Only workers can win elections."

Let's admit it then. Neither of us relies on systems—and we are both arguing about them. This is perfectly reasonable, because, whether you call them "systems" or "methods", ways of organising do make a difference to effectiveness of people's work: sometimes to the number of people who can get to do it. So let's talk about systems.

Individual Cards

Ron goes to a lot of trouble to justify the use of individual canvass cards in the by-election. He says, for instance, that the original preparations were made to fight the election on the old register and that, therefore, we expected to deal with a large number of Postal Votes and Removals.

He points out that the large bands of workers who arrived in the constituency for "short, sharp periods of concentrated canvassing" were "dealt with expeditiously, but only because" the single card system is sufficiently flexible to break down for small groupings. The doubtfuls, he says, had to be given special attention.

Not all of these reasons are fully acceptable. I don't agree that it is essential to stick to the original selected material once it was clear in January, that the election was not to be fought on the old register. And indeed, the election had come when the old register was in force, the crop of Removals and Postal Votes due to it in fact could have been segregated from the start by reference to Lists B and C published on 28th November, and could have been the subject of a special, well worthwhile canvass.

But I didn't, in any case, qua

the use of individual canvass cards. (I prefer 'household' canvass cards because they are less bulky, will cope more readily to canvassers, many people they have to deal with in one house, involve less writing and are much more easily turned into reasonable-sized permanent record for the election. And, incidentally, they will 'break down' just as well for all stints of canvassing.)

Previous Material

So far as I am concerned, 'individual' or 'household' cards are the only material to use for canvassing by-election or any sort of election between elections.

My claim was that the card (with chart) and method of organising knocking up and committee room work is wasteful, confusing and inefficient and that some kind of carbon-copy system is infinitely preferable. I am not impressed by the argument given by Ron of timed tests at London-Middlesex region schools resulting in identical times for three different methods.

It is much too restricted a test this. It doesn't take into account the number of cards necessary in the committee room, the number of errors made, the length of time knockers-up are kept waiting, or the time for knockers-up to return at frequent intervals to the committee room with cards.

I shall not repeat the arguments for a carbon system which I set out in my letter, but would like to ask this question. If, indeed, peak polling conditions were simulated in all the tests, how many polling numbers saved in the committee room remained to be dealt with at the end of the test using the individual card and pasted register methods? ... Using carbon, the answer is, of course, nil.

In recent years, and particularly in the twelve months what has come to be called the 'Reading System' (or rather part of it which concerns the knock-up technique) has been tried by many areas previously using the pasted register and committee room system. The criticisms of it that have come to my ears (and they have been invited) have not always arisen from the work to be done before polling day and a diffi-

culty in getting typing or writing done in time.

This difficulty doesn't arise in an election where there are plenty of workers available. Only once have I known a party to go back to a previously used method after trying carbon copies and then the reason given had nothing to do with the advantages to be gained on polling day.

However, I don't deny the value of these demonstrations at schools on Organisation and when they are demonstrations which test one system against another, their usefulness is probably enhanced, so long as we don't draw conclusions from them that the tests don't justify and so long as we don't fall over ourselves to ensure that the committee room conditions are the same for all the tests, since different systems require different numbers of operators to begin with.

If any more tests are likely to be carried out at future London-Middlesex schools, I would be very happy, if invited, to bring up a team from Reading to demonstrate the committee room part of the 'Reading' System.

Harry Gibbs

CANDIDATES

THE following were endorsed as prospective Parliamentary Candidates by the National Executive Committee recently:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| South Bedfordshire | Mr. W. H. Johnson |
| Cirencester & Tewkesbury | Mr. J. M. Bowyer |
| Manchester, Moss Side | Mr. N. Morris |
| Bosworth | Mr. Woodrow L. Wyatt |
| Melton | Mr. C. W. Shepherd |
| Greenwich | Mr. R. W. Marsh |
| Epsom | Mr. D. E. Heather |
| Midlothian | Mr. J. Hill |
| Orkney & Shetland | Mr. R. S. McGowan |

★

WITHDRAWAL OF CANDIDATURE

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Aylesbury | Miss S. Stratford-Lawrence |
| Barnet | Dr. C. Bibby |
| Ludlow | Mr. R. Barker |

Local Effort Brings Results

SOME of Mr. Wevell's remarks in the June *Labour Organiser* have provoked me into writing to you with some opposition to his point of view. I feel he has failed to appreciate the very special type of problem that exists in the rural areas of the South-West, and I also feel that his remedy of a full-time travelling propaganda officer is unrealistic in these areas.

Country people do not like to be constantly disturbed by loudspeakers, neither do they like frequent door-knocking by canvassing teams. The more rural the area, the more that holds true. Neither are they persuaded in a few minutes' talk to change their minds politically.

But to suggest, as Mr. Wevell does, that there is a lack of spirit or enthusiasm in these areas is quite wrong. Certainly he is wrong as regards Torrington. Also, I have good reason to believe he is wrong about three other constituencies about which I have some knowledge, namely: North Devon, North Cornwall, and Honiton.

Covering these four constituencies we have an Organising Assistant, Mr. Ted Short. He is a magnificent organiser, propagandist, publicist, and hard worker combined. He does a wonderful job against tremendous pressure and against long odds, and is completely unperturbed by either. His spirit and enthusiasm are untiring.

★ ★ ★

In Torrington, under his guidance, the sale of booklets has reached unprecedented levels; the membership has increased three and four times. They are active members and our local meetings are regularly and well attended.

We have, at last, secured sufficient funds to purchase our own loudspeaker equipment and we are showing our colours and our efficiency in every part of this scattered community. A good local Press and publicity by means of the local weekly papers is a tremendous spur to local workers and is worth far more than any visiting propaganda officer.

In fact, every single item of the suggested publicist's job is at present being

performed by Mr. Ted Short or myself as far as loudspeaker work is concerned.

No one quarrels with the statement that we have to "make more Socialists". Our differences lie in how to do it. I am convinced that only by gradually increasing local efforts shall we get lasting results.

I hope also that many reading this will remember and appreciate that we are the van of the fight against Liberalism. We are determined to stop it and defeat it here, in the South-West.

To do that we need more good calibre organisers or, alternatively, first-class full-time agents. In fact, we need people who are always on the spot and who combine the work of an organiser with that of a propaganda officer, and who constantly give the leadership, the spirit and the enthusiasm to the local workers.

RAY DOBSON

Rural Areas Publicity

DICK WEVELL'S comments in last month's *Labour Organiser* about the alleged paucity and poverty of our publicity and propaganda in rural areas prompts this note of current efforts in this area.

In North Devon, the constituency party recently bought a supply of double crown posters from headquarters. These are being issued free to local parties on application, encouragement being given to make a local display. Thus, in Barnstaple, the aim is to keep at least 100 billposting sites going till October.

Individual party members are helping by adopting particular sites and, either themselves, or in concert with others, paying the billposting costs.

Now, trade union branches are being approached to consider this matter and enquire if the branch, or union members would like to adopt a site or sites. Already, members are showing lively interest in acquiring sites facing adjacent to their works' entrances!

In the same constituency, the candidate will shortly be making another of his

quent week-end visits. All affiliated
ies are being invited to join the
eral teams of helpers and the loud-
akers on a tour of the villages. This
alcade will sell literature and distri-
e leaflets. The more volunteers with
d, the bigger the impression of our
ngth of purpose!

the Honiton constituency, a local
y with sizeable reserves (in a building
d, incidentally) has now offered to
plement the loudspeaker fund
mediately to enable equipment to be
ght, provided enough promises of
can be obtained from local speakers.
o economise, it is likely that a local
nber will be asked to construct the
to our specification. When ready, this
n will be led by local propagandists,
of whom has fought the constituency.
should be able to teach others. And,
ourse, the present candidate will assist
n available.

★ ★ ★

hen, too, in Honiton, there are 77
ble crown poster sites, 38 in the
ns, 37 in the villages. These are
ently showing a headquarters propa-
da poster, running for two weeks.

North Cornwall, the constituency
has its own loudspeaker set, recently
ented by a member.

he same member has also bought a
recorder which is available to the
y on loan. When announced at the
eral Committee, the chairman
nptly capped this generosity with a
ue for one year's subscription to the
onal tape library service. It was at
meeting that the members were told
24 feet of their local Press cuttings
e filed last year!

ll this, not amounting to much, is set
n merely as a slight corrective to the
estion that in these areas our publi-
and propaganda is 'practically non-
ent'. Send us the professional
pagandists, certainly, if they can be
e available. Meanwhile, we are
ing what impact we can!

TED SHORT

He Says it Again

OU published my comments on
propaganda work and added some
arks which made me wonder if the

matter which is so painfully clear to me
has been expressed so that it is equally
clear to others. May I have a further try?

1. In general the case is that the Party
is *not* making sufficient converts

2. This is due to the fact that insuffi-
cient effort has been devoted to *making
more Socialists*.

3. In some areas Labour publicity and
propaganda is very limited

This is the position and it seems mere
evasion to say that Head Office is now
issuing some good publicity material and
the policy booklet is fine.

Of course it is the job of parties to
provide publicity. But isn't it their job to
mark the register, get the postal votes,
and do other matters on the organisa-
tional side? Yet the case for agents,
organisers, and even paid canvassers has
been accepted.

My belief is that publicity specialists
would be of equal benefit in the field of
educational and propaganda work. I
wonder how many of your *Labour
Organiser* readers remember the late
Frank Knowles, the Lincolnshire farmer?
Clem Jones once said: "If I could have
Frank Knowles all the time, we'd win the
South-West for Labour."

A visit from Frank Knowles resulted in
widespread activity, literature distribu-
tion, many meetings (mainly outdoors),
poster displays, and so on.

When I say Labour publicity is often
poor, I am not referring to material pro-
duced by Head Office. What I mean, and
I could provide proof galore, is that in
many areas Labour views and news
scarcely appear before the public from
one year's end to the next. Reports in the
local papers are few, so are Labour
letters, while Labour propaganda work is
very slight.

This IS the position in many parts of
Britain, and I do not think anything will
be gained by saying it's the job of some-
body or other to do this or that. All I
feel is that sooner or later the Party will
be forced to take a new look at the whole
question.

And I am glad to know Head Office is
trying out a propaganda van, although
the plan I once put forward did not
involve anything as expensive as that.
Incidentally, I was most interested in the
story of Mr. Hilary Marquand's 'Meet
the People' campaign, and fundamentally
his ideas are much the same as mine.

RICHARD WEVELL

PARTY AND T.U.C. GET TOGETHER

by S. E. Barker

F. W. JOWETT, J.P., a much-loved personality in the Bradford Independent Labour Party, presided over the 1922 Conference held at Edinburgh.

During the course of the previous year the General Council of the Trades Union Congress had approved the scheme of co-ordination, which was before the Labour Party Conference in 1921. Consequently, the Joint National Council, representative of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party Committee, was set up.

There are famous names to be found among the members of the first Joint Council. R. B. Walker, Harry Gosling, C. W. Bowerman, M.P., A. Pugh, and Robert Smillie represented the Trades Union Congress.

J. R. Clynes, M.P., W. Graham, M.P., J. Hodge, M.P., Tom Shaw, M.P., and H. S. Lindsay represented the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The Labour Party representatives were F. W. Jowett, C. T. Cramp, Ramsay MacDonald, Sidney Webb, and Arthur Henderson.

R. B. Walker became the Chairman, Arthur Henderson the Secretary, and Fred Bramley and James S. Middleton Assistant Secretaries.

Research and Information

A further development from the co-ordination scheme discussed at the Brighton Conference was the setting up of the Joint Research and Information Department of the Trades Union Congress and of the Labour Party.

The secretary of this new department was Arthur Greenwood, who was to become a statesman of renown and a well-beloved figure in the Labour movement. W. Milne-Bailey, B.A., Research Officer of the Union of Post Office Workers, and Mrs. B. Wootton,

now Baroness Wootton, were appointed as research workers.

There was yet another merger, the Labour Press and Publicity Department had during the year become the Joint Press and Publicity Department of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party. The secretary was M. W. W. Henderson, now Lord Henderson, and the son of Arthur Henderson.

Herald Taken Over

The national committees of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party had decided to accept responsibility for the continuance of the *Daily Herald* pending decisions of the Party Conference and the Trades Union Congress. At a special session of the Conference, George Lansbury made a statement on the position of the paper. Arthur Henderson, supported by J. R. Clynes, explained the arrangements under which the Labour movement had accepted the responsibility for its continued publication. The resolution approving the action of the National Executive Committee and of the General Council was carried unanimously.

The Conference also endorsed the guarantee given for the support of the paper and pledged itself to increase its circulation to half a million.

There had been rapid strides forward in the field of organisation during the year. Individual membership was on the increase and there were now 2,400 Divisional and Local Labour Parties functioning. Never a day passed without new organisations being formed.

Propaganda was keeping pace with organisational developments and the year was during the year an extraordinarily successful series of special conferences designed to assist in preparations for the coming General Election.

The morning sessions were attended by candidates, election agents, local

ty officers and the subjects under discussion were organisation, electoral and the services of Head Office departments. The afternoon sessions took the form of a mass conference, when attendance varied from 1,500 to 2,000 delegates and members of the Party. Enthusiasm ran high and these conferences appear to have galvanised the whole movement into action.

The National Executive Committee appointed three full-time propagandists as an experiment for six months. Mr. E. Gill, M.C., was allocated to the South-Western and part of the Southern Division. W. T. Toynbee served the Home and Southern Counties, and J. W. Kneewill covered the Northern and Midland Counties, and the National Executive Committee decided to continue their appointments until the General Election.

Four Seats Gained

Twenty-one by-elections took place during the year, Labour contested ten and gained four seats. Those gained were South-East Southwark (T. E. Naylor), Manchester Clayton (J. E. Sutton), Camwell North (C. G. Ammon), Leicester (Alderman G. Banton).

The total number of agents now employed under the Head Office scheme by affiliated organisations was 167. There was a heated debate on the paragraph in the National Executive Committee report on a resolution which had been carried at the previous year's conference instructing the National Executive Committee to enquire into the terms and conditions of remuneration and service of Labour Party agents.

The National Executive Committee had referred this to the Organisation Subcommittee for consultation and report. It had been decided that an enquiry on the lines suggested was unnecessary as particulars were given each half year in the agents' reports. The Adjustments Board provided a medium whereby special cases could be enquired into.

The report said that the National Executive Committee recognised the importance of ensuring security of tenure and continuity of employment and would not pathetically consider any practical proposals made to achieve such conditions. It pointed out that the responsibility did not rest with the National Executive Committee, but with the constituency parties and affiliated bodies who were

responsible for agency appointments.

The present state of the development of the Party and the prevailing economic conditions militated against any substantial element of permanency, and it was the duty of employing bodies when appointing agents to make the conditions absolutely clear to all applicants.

Debts To Agents

Mr. E. J. Hookway, agent for Heywood and Radcliffe, strongly resented the attitude of the National Executive Committee. He contended that the half-yearly reports gave no idea of the real conditions. Some local parties were heavily in debt to their agents and if the National Executive Committee had carried out the instructions given to it by Conference in 1921, the enquiry would have revealed some surprising and terrible conditions. He moved the reference back of the paragraph in order that the National Executive Committee could carry out in full the instructions given to it 12 months earlier.

Arthur Henderson replied to the debate and expressed regret that any statement should have been made which might create the impression that the National Executive Committee was out of sympathy with the agents, or that their services were not warmly appreciated. Under the existing system of organisation the National Executive Committee was not in a position to give security of tenure as they were not the employers. By making grants from national funds the National Executive Committee had tried to contribute towards security.

Finally, Arthur Henderson contended that security in the agency service could not be accomplished until every agent in the country was the employee of the National Executive Committee. In the meantime, the National Executive Committee would do the best it could in the interests of the agency service.

What would have amounted to a vote of censure on the National Executive Committee, had the reference back been carried, was heavily defeated.

Tactics of Disruption

The National Executive Committee had received a number of letters seeking guidance in regard to the eligibility of delegates to the General Committees of local parties. A number of organisations had been confronted with the tactics of disruptive delegates who had impeded the work of the local organisations and had

openly declared they were hostile to the Labour Party.

It was realised immediately that this was not a local problem but one which had to be dealt with at national level. Conference therefore approved the amendment to the Model Rules of the Party relating to the conditions of eligibility of delegates from the constituent bodies to local parties, or to any national or local conference of the Party. The amendment laid down that every person nominated to serve as a delegate should individually accept the Constitution and Principles of the Labour Party.

The amendment also included a clause which said that no person should be eligible as a delegate who was a member of an organisation having for one of its objects the return to Parliament or to other local governing authorities of a candidate or candidates other than such as had been endorsed by the Labour Party, or had been approved as running in association with the Labour Party.

LETTER

Helpers Are There

I WAS very interested in Emrys Jones's article on the recruitment of election workers, for I had just opened a similar campaign in one of the constituencies for which I am responsible.

As I feel sure that many people who read the article might think that this success was some isolated incident, I give a report of our initial achievements:

Calls made: 71, Promises of help: Canvass 7, Knock up 6, Poll station 7, Deliver 15, Committee Room Work 3, Cars 2, Collectors 5, Car Drivers 1, New Members 1, Postal Vote Observers 6, Display Large Posters 28.

In addition, we found four removals, and, most surprising, six postal votes, and this in an area which had already been well canvassed!

I think much of our success is due to the fact that the members who are undertaking the canvass firmly believe that it is possible to find more workers. They therefore start off with an advantage in that they are able to make other people confident that they, too, can undertake Party work successfully.

R. BREWER

KEY WORKERS ARE WARNED IN BLANK VERSE

IN the marginal seat of Colchester a valiant effort is being made to win the seat for Labour at the next General Election.

Recently a number of key workers were given a folder containing information and literature to help them with their organisational tasks in hand. On the front of the folder appears the following time warning:

THE RUSH JOB

I AM A RUSH JOB.

I BELONG TO no age, for men have always hurried.

I prod all human endeavour.

Men believe me necessary—but false.

I rush today because I was not planned yesterday.

I demand excessive energy and concentration.

I override obstacles, but at great expense.

I illustrate the old saying 'haste makes waste'.

My path is strewn with the evils of overtime, mistakes and disappointments.

Accuracy and quality give way to speed.

Ruthlessly, I rush on.

I am a 'RUSH JOB'.

If the Agents' Union crowned a Baron this year's laurel wreath should be placed on the head of William Alston, the agent for Colchester.

1960 Boro' Election:

NEXT year's Borough Council Elections in England and Wales will be held on Thursday, 12th May. The announcement has been made by the Home Secretary who, under the Representation of the People Act, 1948, has the power to fix the date of the Borough Council Elections in England and Wales.

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